

Public Safety, My High Priority

By Gary C. Ovitt

As a schoolteacher I always told my students that actions speak louder than words, and recent actions here at the Board make it loud and clear that Public Safety is a high priority. Placing access to the State's Megan's Law database on the County's website, leasing additional prison space on a long-term basis, purchasing new state-of-the-art helicopters for the Sheriff, and committing to use Global Positioning Satellite (GPS) technology to track probationers are all actions taken within the past month that strengthen public safety.

Hopefully by now you know you can access the State's Megan's Law database through the County's website (www.sbcounty.gov). If not, then it's safe to assume you haven't taken the time to view the website. Let me encourage you, whether you have children or not, visit this site to know if any of these individuals live in your neighborhood. Since this site has been up, I've heard many stories of people shocked at who lives close to them and their children's schools. So, take a few minutes and view this important information. If after viewing this information someone concerns you, contact local law enforcement. The most important thing we can do, as community members, is educate ourselves.

Leasing additional prison space means the Sheriff will no longer have to release 900 to 1,500 prisoners each month back onto our streets. This immediate solution buys the County time to design a long-range solution to deal with the growing inmate population we're experiencing as a result of our amazing growth.

The Sheriff's current fleet of helicopters is a mishmash of design and function. The recent purchase of 3 new helicopters will allow the Sheriff to replace that fleet with state-of-the-art helicopters to support various public safety functions.

Keeping track of the County's probationers is a monumental task for our Probation Department. GPS technology is now available and offered by private companies to help track, in real-time, probationers who are at high risk of committing additional crimes. By allowing these companies to compete for our business, we can better supervise these criminals at no additional cost to the taxpayers. With this technology, San Bernardino County probationers will be monitored with a level of accuracy few counties in the nation achieve.

My commitment to public safety is born in the fact that my father served as an Ontario Police officer. The role model he presented left an impression of the importance of work done by law enforcement officers. They deserve the tools and resources to best do their job. Local government's number one charge is to protect the public, and with the ability to provide those resources, we have no excuse not to.

As I serve as County Supervisor I will always work to protect our communities. The many changes we are facing as a county will create new challenges in the arena of public

safety. We need Supervisors who are dedicated to working through those challenges, and who provide strong leadership to ensure the safety of our community.